

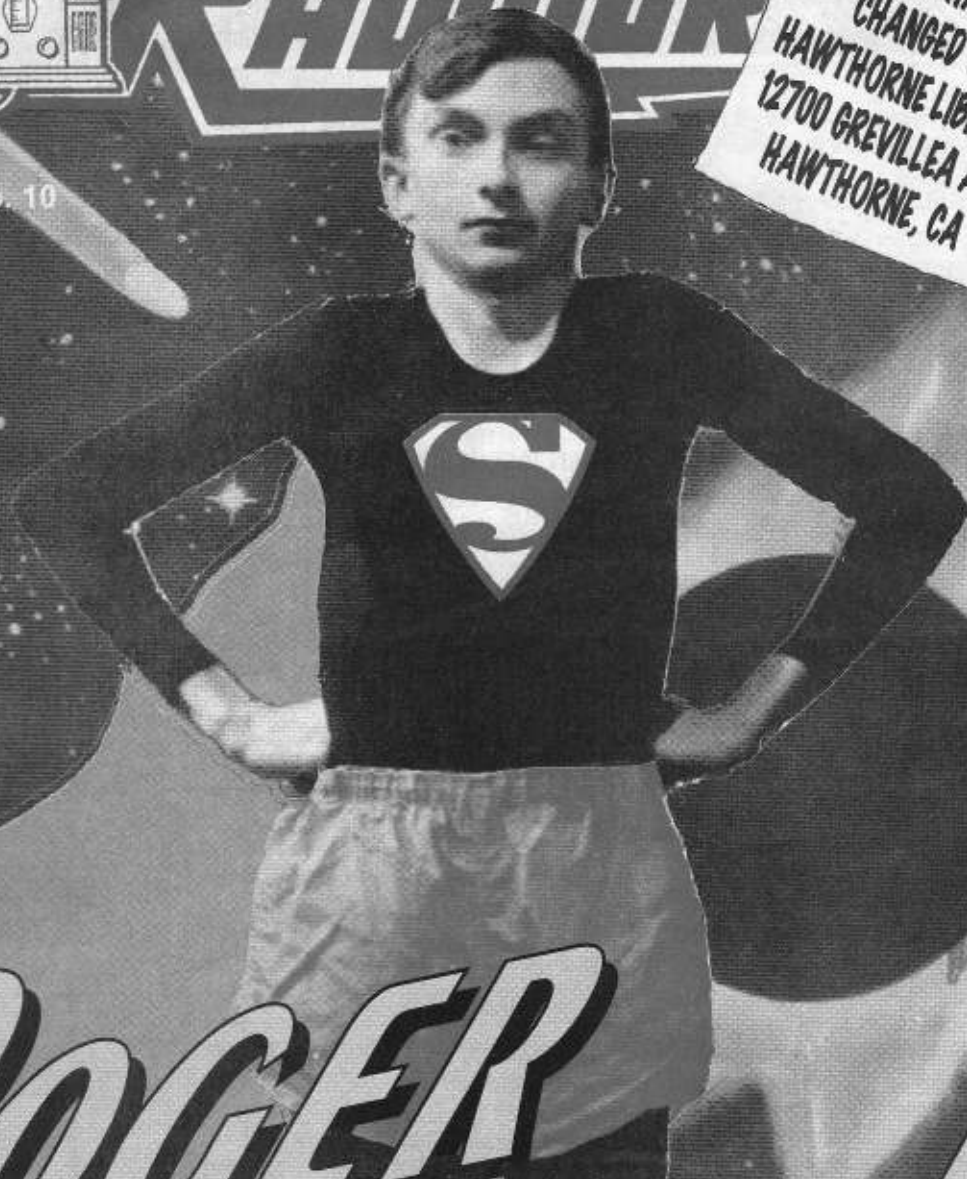
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RADIOGR

Vol. 33 • No. 10

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ROGER AND RADIO



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RADIOGRAM

Volume 33 • Number 10 • July 2008

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Q & A

What Do You Mean No Fiction?

FROM TIME TO TIME I get questions from readers, and though I try to answer each e-mail I also collect these questions with the idea that I'll eventually answer them in my column for the benefit of all readers. I figure that if I confused one reader I've probably confused others. So, it's time for a summertime Q&A.

I enjoy reading about the new books that are coming out on old-time radio. You're just about the only publication that gives us that information.

So where do you find this information? Publishers send press releases about their new books, and I've put *Radiogram* on as many publishers' lists as possible. Sometimes, for the sake of expedience, we merely reproduce the press releases, and that explains why many of our articles about new books sound overly hyped. Other times someone on the staff—me—will rewrite the press releases to tone down the "greatest work ever written about OTR" puffery. It's nice to see so many books dealing with OTR subjects.

Here's one of the dumbest questions ever asked: Does SPERDVAC pay itself for those clever ads in Radiogram, the ones advertising radio shows in their catalog? Not really. When space allows I fill that space with adverts for programs in SPERDVAC's gargantuan collection. If a show has been on my mind for some reason I check it's availability in SPERDVAC's holdings and then make an advert for it. I enjoy doing that. And it wasn't a dumb question; I usually give a dumb answer.

Why didn't you publish my letter? Like most periodicals, *Radiogram* tries to publish all letters received according to our format restrictions. But sometimes a letter might be the umpteenth letter on a subject that has been "talked to death." Your letter may get the deep six because it was late in the conversation, as it were.

You state in your letters requirements that letters shouldn't be over 250 words and yet you often print letters that are twice that. What gives? Outside of other considerations such as decency or libel, a 250-word length pretty much guarantees publication. Longer letters are published because space allows a longer letter, i.e., poor ol' ed is trying to fill up 16-pages of newsletter; or longer letters are published because ol' ed believes the subject of the letter needed the space to make its point clear. In

theory, though, we prefer 250-words.

When are you going to publish my article? Most everything that comes my way sees print one way or the other. Sometimes I send back an article with suggestions for improvement, which often riles the author and I never hear from him again. Sometimes I do extensive editing, and in very rare cases I reject an article. Believe it or not, I have a couple of articles that must be five or six years old, and I'm waiting for the right moment for their publication. What

could that moment be? In these cases the articles are comprehensive, which means a lot of space is required, and I'm waiting for a moment when I can do the articles justice. Be patient.

Can I submit fiction featuring my favorite radio characters? No. I prefer *Radiogram* remain a nonfiction treasury of old-time radio information. At times I think of *Radiogram* as a small archeological journal in that our contributors "dig up" some of the most interesting facts about a dead art form.

How about a few articles about OTR TV shows? I'd wager that a lot of us who love OTR also love old TV shows. For instance, were the writers and producers of radio's Gunsmoke the same people who turned it into a TV show? What were they thinking about when trying to turn a great radio show into a TV show? I have no problem with that. In fact, I know of one promised article about a series' transition to television. But I must state that many, many years ago I was given explicit instructions to never talk television. I am assuming that edict yet stands, and so I read that to mean that I cannot publish anything directly tied to television—such as an article that speaks only of TV's *Lone Ranger*—but an article about a transition from radio to TV seems within boundaries.

You do great work, and I appreciate everything you do. I have a question: Are you the same Patrick Lucanio who wrote a book about the psychological implications of 1950s monster movies called Them or Us? Yep, that is I, ol' ed. That goes back to the 1980s. Where'd you ever find that book? I was being rhetorical but he answered: I received it as a gift from an admirer, who apparently had found it in a used bookstore. Ah, used bookstores are my favorite haunts. ♣



The Editor Has His Say

"Whatever happened to Peet?"

New Book Examines Radio Advertising in Golden Age



SOLD ON RADIO

ADVERTISERS IN THE GOLDEN AGE OF BROADCASTING

Jim Cox
320 pages • Hardcover • \$55
McFarland and Company
978-0786433919

A new book by prolific OTR writer Jim Cox answers an important question: Just how was it that American would fund its nascent national radio service?

In *Sold on Radio: Advertisers in the Golden Age of Broadcasting*, published June 2008 by McFarland and Company, chronicles the story of American radio advertising. It states that government control and a subscription-like model were both considered as methods to fund radio, but soon an advertising system emerged, which led to the golden age.

The book, divided into two parts, studies the commercialization of network radio. The first part covers the general history of radio advertising, and includes chapters on advertising agencies, audience measurement services, copywriters and the pitchmen.

The second part examines major radio advertisers from that period, with profiles of 24 companies that maintained a strong presence on the airwaves.

Included in those 24 advertisers are such recognizable names as Brown and Williamson Tobacco, Campbell Soup, Colgate-Palmolive-Peet, General Foods, Kellogg's, Philip Morris Company, Proctor and Gamble, and Quaker Oats. For each company Jim offers a history of the corporation and then lists the radio series sponsored by the company. He adds

what he calls "exposition" to each company in which he offers an analysis of the company's preferences in sponsoring their dramas. For example, Quaker Oats "appeared smitten with underdogs, or possibly doing things the way the competition didn't." Finally, he offers a sample commercial.

The book contains three appendices with the first listing with commentary "100 More Advertisers in Radio's Golden Age," and a glossary of advertising and broadcasting jargon. For instance, in "radioese" a cushion is a "show segment that can be cut so the director can the show off the air on time."

The book is heavily noted and features a comprehensive index.

The hardcover is available at \$55 from Amazon.com or from the book's publisher, McFarland and Company at www.mcfarland-pub.com or 1-800-253-2187



Info on Gale Gordon sought

Author Jim Manago is seeking clippings and other materials about Gale Gordon for a book that will be published by BearManor Media.

Jim can be contacted through BearManor at P. O. Box 71426 in Albany, GA 31708 or 229-436-4265.

Jim is the author of *Love is the Reason for it All: The Shirley Booth Story* published by BearManor.

July 12 meeting location changed

The special membership meeting to vote on removal of four directors and to reform election rules has been changed from the Westside Pavilion in West Los Angeles to the Hawthorne Library at 12700 Grevillea Ave. in Hawthorne, CA.

The meeting is set for Saturday, July 12, and will begin at noon.

The Hawthorne Library is one block west of Hawthorne Blvd. between El Segundo Blvd. and 126th street. From the 405 Freeway go east on El Segundo to Grevillea.

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SPERDVAC

STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR
ENDING FEBRUARY 29, 2008

REVENUE:

| | |
|----------------------------|----------|
| Membership Dues | \$15,920 |
| Interest Income | 9,341 |
| Luncheon | 7,479 |
| Library Fees | 5,465 |
| Donations Received | 5,110 |
| Miscellaneous Income | 1,371 |
| Merchandise Sales | 30 |

TOTAL REVENUE:..... \$44,716

EXPENDITURES:

| | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Newsletter Costs | \$17,901 |
| Luncheon Costs | 9,942 |
| Libraries Expense | 1,723 |

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Building Expense | \$7,584 |
| Depreciation | 6,984 |
| Membership Expense | 2,175 |
| Postage | 966 |
| Miscellaneous Expense | 946 |
| Meeting Expense | 905 |
| Supplies | 655 |
| Phone | 458 |
| Tax and License | 55 |
| Bad Check Expense | 50 |

TOTAL REVENUE:..... \$50,343

EXCESS OF EXPENDITURES OVER REVENUE:..... (\$5,627)

TOTAL CASH FEB. 28, 2007.....\$218,212

TOTAL CASH FEB. 29, 2008.....\$215,556

INCREASE (DECREASE).....(\$2,656)



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ad

VERSÉ

 by **conditions**

Fred Essex

WHETHER it's the original cliché or a take-off on an old one, how true it is when said that "Money Makes the World Go 'Round," especially when it relates to the media. Think of the multi-millions that are being spent on the primaries this year and the months still to come. All these dollars in addition to the amounts usually earmarked for the usual advertising.

And it's ever been so. In the days of old-time radio when clients were first ready to spend, it mattered little that the amount of commercial time was dictated by the FCC. Copywriters became a bit more ingenious when selling a product to a listening audience, and did so within the required short period of time.

Another limiting factor: Advertising can influence the listener to try a product only once. If it isn't liked, no further ads will induce him to try it again. The writers were aware of this fact of life, so all additional commercials that were scheduled, regardless of how clever they might be, must be considered simply as "reminder" ads.

With these limitations, many OTR commercials were so imaginative several are still recalled. They included unique identifying sounds to jog a listener's memory when he intended to buy a product.

Let's give it a try. Remember LSMFT (clack-clack clack-clack-clack); Rinso White (octave whistle); San Francisco fog horn for Lifebuoy (Beee-Oooh); (railroad clickity-clack) Bromo Seltzer, Bromo Seltzer; Pall Mall Cigarettes (Navy vessel sounding whoop-whoop-whoop)—just a few created by the Ad Agency with which I was associated.

More? Catch phrases were used by us as well as other agencies, such as, Travels the smoke further; Contains 'Latakia'; Happy little washday song; Where's the beef; Don't be mad, get Glad; Snap, crackle and pop; and

So round, so firm, so fully packed.

Perhaps it would take a psychologist to explain why we instinctively respond to such sounds and phrases. Possibly one successful client summed it up when he said, "Repetition, repetition, repetition. Repetition makes reputation."

This is a quick glance at the different factors woven into a spot announcement before the buy is made in an entertaining program. It's a trade off: Provide the proverbial "carrot" of entertainment for the opportunity to reach the subconscious minds of those within the demographic sought, to instill the values of the product being advertised.

If you did recall some of these illustrations—and there were thousands more created by other agencies—Congratulations for most were conceived more than a half-century ago.

One of the top executives in our agency responsible for several high budget accounts, had a teenager in high school. She had suggested he be invited to address an assembly on advertising. He couldn't say, "No," but had an idea.

He asked if I would make a recording of ten of our commercials, complete with sound effects and catch phrases, but omitting the product name.

He invited me to go with him, along with the playback equipment and the special 12" recording. I half-listened to his opening remarks to about 200 students but suddenly became alert when I heard him introduce me with a credit line and said I had something special for them to hear.

Since I had put the record together and knew what was on it, without losing a beat as if it had been pre-planned, I thanked him and explained to the assembly the importance of product identification. Then a disturbing thought. These kids are in school and not included in the demographic for which the

commercials were intended, plus the fact their age group was hard to reach: their thoughts are hardly on our products when listening to radio.

After explaining I had a little quiz for them and proceeded to play the first cut, Surprise! They identified it. And the second. And all ten! Once the commercial began they collectively yelled out the name. I looked at the exec and he was beaming. Great. But then an unsettling realization: We can influence the younger generation without them knowing it and shape their thoughts and buying patterns. But why single them out. Copywriters are meant to influence us all.

OTR used the theater of the mind to convey a message. Today I wonder about the effectiveness of many TV commercials, which generally appear to entertain or excite with visual effects before finally mentioning the product. However, one does come to mind that resorted to the solid basics used during the otr days. From its inception it was immediately successful.

The client's product was not difficult to sell but their name was. They were The California Milk Processing Board. Whoopie. How to do the job for them and still get across their message to sell more product? Certainly a challenge. But the genius of a San Francisco ad agency hit on a phrase and in short dramatic visual sequences led up to the sell, and did it in two words.

Ready? Sure you know it: "Got milk?"

Just one more success story of the power to influence the mind through suggestion via audio and visual stimulation.

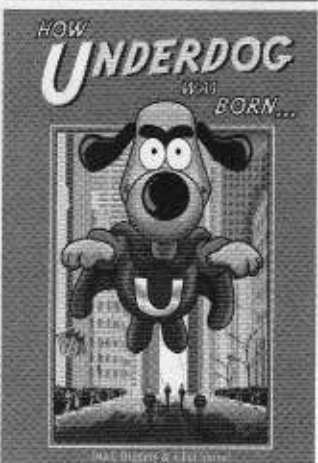
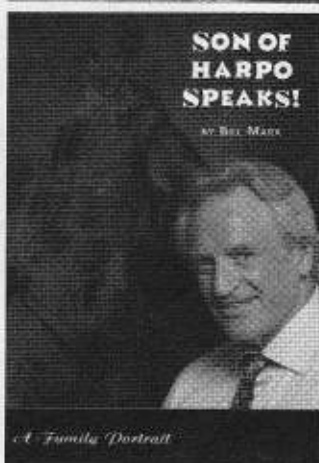
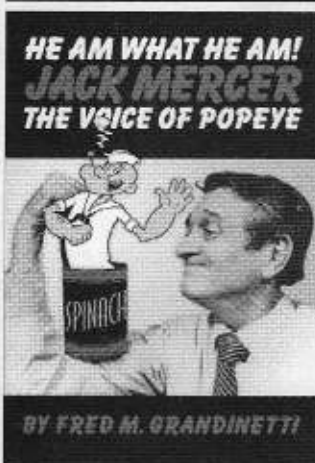
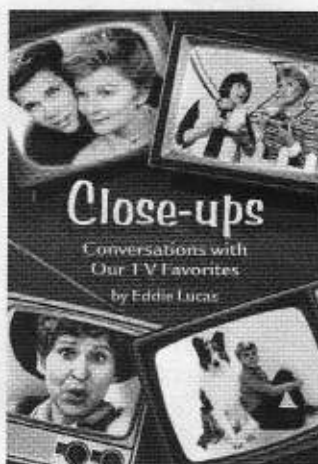
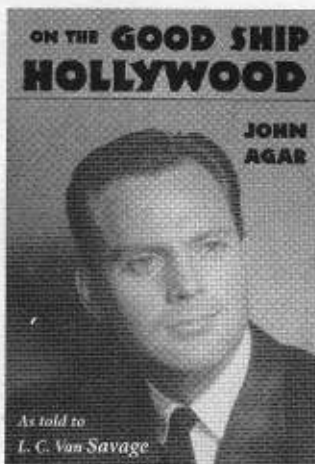
OTR began the satisfying blend of entertainment with commercial interruptions after congress set up a regulatory plan in the early days to license stations. It now appears the mix will be with us ad infinitum.

Continued Page 14

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How Radio ROGER SAVED THE DRAMA DEPARTMENT

by
TEACHER X

MISUNDERSTANDING is what my predecessor called it. I called it just plain stupid.

The stupid misunderstanding began my second year of teaching, that would be 1973, at a small high school. I had been hired to teach English, journalism and speech. The drama teacher had resigned the year before, preferring greener pastures, and rather than replace him permanently the administration gave the job temporarily to the choral director. He didn't want it, but since he had produced a series of successful revues he was a natural for the now labeled "performing arts" department.

When I met Jerry Caine he asked if I were interested in drama. I replied that I had a minor in speech and drama. "Please take the drama—uh—performing arts department," he said. I said I would be glad to, and so with the administration's blessing I would assume duties as head of the performing arts—uh—now drama department the following year.

All summer I prepared for a new season of drama, thinking that *Death of a Salesman* would make for a great opening production.

I was excited and prepared, and so with the air turning cold and the leaves turning brown I walked into the high school office and asked the administrative assistant for a copy of the drama budget. She handed me a blank piece of paper. I laughed and so did she. I then jovially asked for the drama budget and

she replied jovially, "that's it."

"There's nothing here," I said, and she replied that there is no budget. No budget? But how am I to produce plays?

"I'm not sure," she said. "We've never had this happen before."

"But what happened?"

"You didn't budget for the theatre department."

"But I thought Jerry would"—I cut myself off. Why would Jerry prepare a budget when he was no longer in charge? The responsibility fell on the tinhorn, and the tinhorn failed. The tinhorn thought that since Jerry was technically in charge Jerry would prepare the budget for the following year or at least just leave the budget as it was.

"Your broke" read the memo from the principal, and now I was in a world of hurt. I had no money to produce any kind of legitimate play. I was to be stuck with non-royalty works. I thought about Shakespeare but not at this school. I thought about Greek tragedies but they had all been converted into the King's English and the translators rightfully wanted their cut.

Meanwhile, time was running out. The administration expected at least two main stage productions—one per semester—from the neophyte director, and the fall semester was going by quickly.

I had few options. A few non-royalty plays, like *Hillbillies in New York* and *The*

Creepy Old House on Cemetery Road, were available for the cost of the scripts, which had been inflated to the degree that I figured they were getting royalties anyway. I could rummage through old anthologies in the hope of finding old copyright-free plays that still had some class left and that would be able to bring in an audience.

But even if I did find a script I still had no money for the production aspects. How could I construct and furnish sets?

I had a suspicion that the administration was stonewalling, and that the administration was getting a lot of pleasure out of my dilemma. I had heard that the reason Jerry's predecessor had left was because he had done the usual in the high school setting: he had produced a couple of controversial plays that riled not only the administration but the school board. As far as the administration was concerned my inability to pay as I went meant tough! That is, "close 'em down."

Days passed, and while I lay in bed, tossing and fretting, I thought about Edgar Allan Poe and that madman who stated "True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad?" I sat up in bed. The tape! Being an old-time radio buff I had just listened to a tape of *Mystery in the Air* with Peter Lorre in "The Tell-Tale Heart." The story was in the public domain—no royalties!

It was past midnight but I nonetheless ran

For personal reasons the author prefers to remain known as Teacher X. Although he hails from parts unknown we do know that he taught for over 30 years and upon retirement does very little except listen to *OTR*. Opposite is the amazing Roger Sales as Superman in poster art.



Lewis Nicol as the living corpse in "The Monkey's Paw," one of four *Tales from Beyond the Crypt* inspired by old-time radio.

to my office and retrieved with swift hands a volume of curious forgotten lore. It was *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, and the first story was "The Tell-Tale Heart." I could adapt this and other stories into an omnibus play, I thought. No royalties were demanded by anyone because Poe was in the public domain, and the name Poe was respectable.

As the muse led me, I remembered that a popular horror film of the time was titled *Tales from the Crypt*, which in turn was based on a 1950s comic book series. The film was composed of four stories tied together by a storyteller. Sure, I thought, a storyteller with a sense of humor could introduce each story, and he could take the audience through a squeaking door into the depths of the crypt. Why not name him Raymond?

After a weekend at the typewriter I was able to cobble together four stories under the title, *Tales from Beyond the Crypt*.

Now that I had a script with what I trusted was a bankable title, I had to find a way of getting a set together. So I appealed to a few creative students (who would become my technical crew at the high school) to set out to find anything that could be converted into a set.

"We have triangle flats stored under the stadium," said my primary lighting director.

"We have enough, I think, for us to set up at least a back wall. That would allow us three scene changes if we have some paint."

My stage manager interjected. "I think Mr. Harvey at the hardware store will give us some paint. He knows my dad, and he likes to do stuff for the school."

"What about set pieces?" I asked.

"Well, we could bring some furniture from home," replied the costumer. "We have an old chair and a bunch of tables in the family room we could use."

"We'll give your parents credit in the program," I said.

So I sent my tech crew to visit Mr. Harvey at Harvey's Hardware, and when they returned they had ten gallons of paint—free of charge.

"We'll give Mr. Harvey credit in the program," I said.

I handed the script to

Rod Anderson, considered the best actor in the school, and told him he was Raymond. I then rounded up a cast for the four short plays, including "The Tell-Tale Heart" and a non-Poe story called "The Monkey's Paw" by W.W. Jacobs. We set about rehearsing each night while the technical crew worked on changing those canvas-coated triangle flats into expressionistic designs of crypts and old houses.

So far we hadn't spent a nickel other than a few dollars out of my own pocket for a few odds and ends. Being head of drama and journalism allowed me to use the services of the journalism department so I "borrowed" printer funds from the journalism department

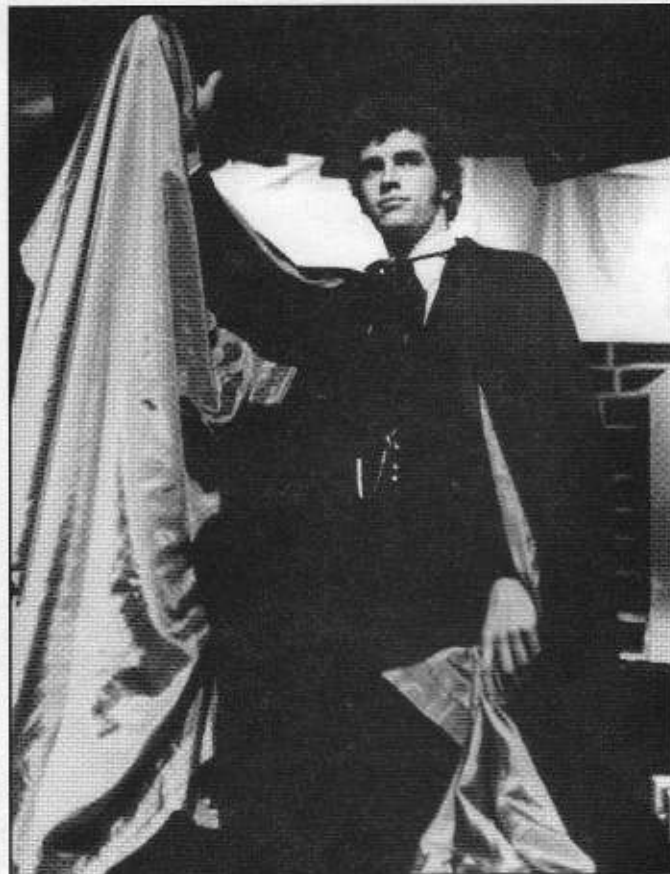
to pay for large and garish posters advertising our post-Halloween show. My technical crew plastered the posters all over town, and we awaited opening night.

Our publicity worked because we had students lined up around the block waiting to get in, and in the end *Tales from Beyond the Crypt* was a smashing success. It was boxoffice boffo! I counted the take, and we were in the money. We were in the money, that is, until the bill for the posters came in. After I paid the printer we had ten bucks.

"Well," Rod lamented, "that's ten dollars more than we had when we started."

So I was back in agony. What could I produce that would cost \$10? I needed something that would bring in ten times that amount to keep the drama department alive and well. So I figured that if radio worked the first time why not a second time? But I didn't know what I could do. *Tales from Beyond the Crypt* was inspired by radio but it was more like a midnight horror show with one of those TV horror hosts than a radio show.

Time was running out, and as I gave my



Rod Anderson as storyteller Raymond—no, not *that* Raymond but close enough—in *Tales from Beyond the Crypt*. Each time Raymond finished an introduction the lights faded and the audience heard a squeaking door.

literature class a midterm exam, I sat at my desk sketching ideas. I scoured every literature book on the shelf. I wrote out titles and drew poster designs. I turned the paper askew somehow, and I saw a combination of two words: Radio and Revue. Eureka! Why not a revue of radio shows? Why not an educational radio revue?

That night I cloistered myself inside my study and began writing a history of radio whose watershed moments would be dramatized. We would need nothing in the way of a set other than *express* the idea of a radio studio.

The next day I called my cast and crew together and told them what I had in mind, and they all responded with "huh?" They knew nothing about radio except top-40. That was okay because I'd teach them, and I had hundreds of radio shows on tape that I could lend them.

In two weeks I finished what I finally called *Radio Ramble*. The format was simple. The play opened inside the studio of KWHS using the initials of the high school as call letters. Borrowing the omnibus format that was successful with *Tales from Beyond the Crypt*, I called upon Rod again but this time to portray a late night radio personality named Michael Ballantine who argues for the return of the "theatre of the mind." As he speaks, he conjures certain defining moments of radio history, and the scene shifts focus to a dramatization of those moments.

We set up the radio studio by thrusting stage left into the audience. My predecessor, Jerry, had an excellent relationship with an electronics retailer in a nearby city, and through Jerry we were able to dress our set with all sorts of electronic gadgets and gizmos with just enough glowing dials and readouts to create a nifty atmosphere for the studio—without cost.

We reserved the main stage for our dramatizations, and using the triangle flats and lighting we created an expressionistic "theatre of the mind." Our radio characters were designed in makeup and costume to be something other than actors dressed for a scene; instead, we exaggerated makeup and costumes to suggest the radio characters as real and not actors. This was particularly effective during the Charlie McCarthy and W.C. Fields sequence of *The Chase and Sanborn Hour*, which never failed to elicit raucous laughter and applause. Rod donned the Bill Fields role and mastered the inimitable

Fields manner and voice to perfection; in fact, on the audiotape of the performance it was difficult to tell that it wasn't Fields. Jeff Tyler, sometimes called Termite by his classmates because of his size, wore a tux—borrowed from a parent—and a top hat and monocle to play Charlie McCarthy. Carol McAllister, our makeup artist, designed Jeff's makeup so he would look not like a living Charlie but as what Charlie really was—a ventriloquist's dummy. So Carol carefully designed Charlie's mouth so it appeared hinged to go up and down only, and Jeff was able to master the effect. When he spoke Jeff moved his mouth up and down while enunciating Charlie's dialogue. Lewis Nicol became Edgar Bergen, and, yes, Jeff sat on Lewis' lap. In amazing coordination Lewis

placed his hand on Jeff's back, and together they worked out a representation of Charlie being manipulated by Bergen right down to Lewis moving his mouth however awkwardly as Charlie spoke. Incredibly, Rod, Jeff and Lewis mastered the exchange flawlessly, and one started to believe that Jeff was actually a dummy being manipulated by Lewis—something Jeff's classmates wouldn't forget.

WHAT the audience came to see, however, was our version of *Superman*. In this segment Lex Luthor has kidnapped Lois and Jimmy, and he is about to destroy Metropolis with his "atomic hydrolixir bomb"—a glass of water. He is foiled at the last moment by Superman, who breaks through a brick wall, drinks the bomb, then unties Lois and Jimmy before leaping through a window and crying out, "Up, up and away!"

There was only one natural for Superman, and his name was Roger Sales. He was the high school's preeminent nerd who, I was told,



Jeff Tyler as Charlie McCarthy and Rod Anderson as W. C. Fields ham it up during break in rehearsal of *Radio Ramble*.

had been begging to get on stage since he arrived as a freshman. All my predecessors had said no, but not because Roger had little or no talent but because Roger thought he had more talent than Sir Laurence Olivier. He was a diva but without the least bit of talent. My drama students pleaded for me not to cast Roger because, in their words, "he was a walking disaster area." As one put it so succinctly, "Roger Sales is a real life jinx."

I nonetheless offered Roger the role of Superman only because of the great physical contrast between Roger and Superman; indeed, Roger was skeletal to the point of emaciation. After speaking with Roger I found a pleasant young man who agreed to the part because he said he wanted to do comedy and he would be more than happy to play off his scrawny size. So we used our \$10 to fashion a Superman costume from blue ballet tights that, to the amazement of everyone, were loose fitting on Roger. Julie Hadden, our costumer, discarded the red briefs for red boxer shorts to give, as she said, a "Mickey

Mouse-nerd look to Superman.”

Roger as Superman was a mess. The costume didn't fit, he was unbelievably bony, and he was hopelessly uncoordinated. And then for some reason—because he was nerd, Julie said—Roger decided to play Superman straight. Roger couldn't act to save his life, but he was determined to play Superman as if Sir Laurence Olivier had opted for the role.

The stage crew had constructed a brick wall out of 50 or so shoe boxes—donated by a department store—so Roger could break through the wall and save Lois and Jimmy. To add to the bomb effect, my lighting crew rigged a flash pot, devised from their model rocketry gear at no expense to the drama department. The script called for Superman, after breaking through the wall, to run to Lois and Jimmy, and when Superman realizes that the hydrolixir bomb is about to go off he drinks the water at which point the flash pot goes off in front of him. Superman frees Lois and Jimmy and captures Lex Luthor. During dress rehearsal Roger missed his mark. He drank the water but the flash pot went off about five feet from where Roger was standing. My stage manager said afterwards, “I gotta feeling about this.”

The play was supposed to be funny, but not farcical.

Roger was so inept as Superman that we



Rod Anderson as the fictional Michael Ballantine, radio's historian.



Michael McNerny and Kristin Hoffman as The Bickersons in *Radio Ramble*. Their perfect timing as John and Blanche won them the year's drama award.

used his image on the poster, and that poster piqued curiosity—along with word about his missed mark, I'm sure—because there was a packed house on opening night.

Radio Ramble went smoothly with *The Chase and Sanborn Hour* and *The Bickersons* eliciting proper laughter and great applause. Then came the time for Superman. Using radio introductions by Jackson Beck to set the stage, the lights came on to reveal Lex Luthor holding Lois and Jimmy at bay. Luthor prattles on about how he intends to destroy Metropolis and getaway in his newly invented flying disc. Luthor then sets the atomic hydrolixir bomb to go off in 30 seconds (by dropping some dry ice into the glass). The water boils, Lex laughs wickedly, and Jimmy cries out, “Look! Up in the sky. It's Superman!” A swoosh is heard from a sound recording, and we all wait for Superman to break through the brick wall.

Roger made it through the wall, all right, but he tripped on the boxes and fell flat on his face. The actors on stage were trying to remain in character as Roger pulled himself up. But they lost control when Roger pushed out what chest he had and said something like “I'll save you, Lois,” which wasn't in the script. Roger really had to save himself, though. As he made for Lois he stepped into one of the shoeboxes. His right foot slid from under him causing him to fall backwards knocking over a pillar, which prompted Lex Luthor to ad-lib, “He is Superman!” Lois began laugh-

ing uncontrollably so she couldn't deliver the next line. So Roger, as Olivier, ad-libbed “I'll get you for this, Lex Luthor, but before I do I have stop you from blowing up the town.” Roger crossed carefully through the boxes to where Lois and Jimmy sat tied to chairs. On the table sat the hydrolixir bomb, and Roger ad-libbed again: “I'll drink this bomb so it won't explode.” Let me remind you: Roger was delivering these lines in dead earnest. Don't confuse his delivery with that of Adam West in the TV series *Batman*.

Roger drank the glass of water, but this time he remained where he was supposed to be. The lights flashed, the explosion was heard, and the flash pot went off—about five feet from where Roger was standing! He was right this time, but the effects crew had rigged the flash pot at the point where Roger had been standing during dress rehearsal. The scene was a mess, but unfazed Roger continued to deliver his lines as Luthor, Jimmy and Lois laughed uncontrollably.

The following night was the final performance, and word of mouth had inspired half the city to show up as well as nearly every teacher on the staff to see Roger Sales as Superman. Even his mother showed up because she wanted to see just how much of a klutz her son was.

As the house lights dimmed I realized that we had standing room only.

The Superman scene was going smoothly, and Jimmy cried out, “Look! Up in the sky!

It's Superman." All eyes are on the brick wall, and in an instant Superman broke through the wall. Roger stayed upright this time, but it was clear that he had been stunned by something. It couldn't have been the shoeboxes so I immediately thought the tech crew had placed real bricks into the shoeboxes. But there were no telltale signs of sabotage, and yet Roger stood in a stupor ever so slightly wobbling as his eyes sort of, well, yes, sort of rolled. I was worried because the play had come to a halt, and truthfully Roger looked as if he were about to fall unconscious.

Roger apparently cleared his head because he began emoting throwaway lines in the finest Olivier tradition. He crossed to the table where the glass was, but before he reached the table he kicked an errant shoebox into the front row where someone took it and yelled, "Thanks, Rog!" Lex Luthor began laughing wildly, which cued Roger to ad-lib again: "You think it's funny, Lex Luthor, well I'll show you what's funny." Roger crossed to Lois, took the glass of water and unintentionally spilled the water onto Lois's lap. The audience roared. Lois was embarrassed, but nothing could have prepared us for what Roger did next. He put the glass back onto the table and then unbelievably began rubbing Lois's lap with his cape, saying "I'm sorry, Lois!" Lois suddenly "broke her bonds," stood up and screamed, "you pervert!" Jimmy and Luthor were laughing so hysterically that they couldn't say their lines, but that didn't stop Roger. He took the empty glass of water and said, "I'll stop you, Lex Luthor. I'll drink this hydrolixir bomb to save Joey and Minnie." As the audience roared again, Roger quickly corrected himself, "Lois and Jimmy." He started to drink from the empty glass but apparently remembered that he hadn't finished his line so he pushed the glass away and added, "and Metropolis."

Roger started to drink from the empty glass again but he apparently had forgotten that the tech crew changed the location of the flash pot to its original location. Roger crossed five feet stage left to where the flash pot was located the night before. He drank the bomb and the flash pot went off five feet away. Roger looked at the crew off-stage and said whispered loud enough for the audience to hear, "You were supposed to put it here."

You may be wondering about Roger and the window. Remember, the script called for Superman to leap through the window

and shout, "Up, up and away!" The crew had rigged a window for Superman to leap through, but during dress rehearsal and both performances Roger ignored the window. He stood front and center, raised his left arm, looked skyward, and shouted, "Up, up and away." Roger then casually walked off stage.

The story you have just read is true. Only the names were changed to protect the innocent. Honest! No kidding!

Roger Sales, who had to have weighed 90 pounds when soaking wet, was a most interesting fellow. He was a nice young man yet a pest. He could be pleasant but too often was just plain obnoxious. Students avoided him because they said he was overly opinionated about everything. As one student said, "Roger was an idiot who thought he was a genius."

In truth, Roger was so socially challenged that one couldn't help but feel sorry for him, and I have to admit that I cast him as Superman partially because I took pity on him. But after Roger made a disaster of the play I was ready to kill him, but my attitude changed as did his when the dust settled. He was now a reserved young man who didn't crave attention. The cast members and crew took a liking to him even though at times, they said, he drove them crazy. Others opened up to him, and he suddenly found himself with quite a few friends. I worried that this sudden popularity might grow that once considerable ego of his, but it didn't. He became, as it were, one of the gang, and his new friends sincerely appreciated "Superman."

And his experience as Superman put an end to his desire to be on the stage.

As much as Superman destroyed my reverent look at old-time radio it also did something that surprised me. *Radio Ramble* garnered interest in radio drama, and so I convinced the head of the English department to sanction an elective class I called Radio and Its Literature. Thirty students enrolled, and we listened to OTR and analyzed each program in terms of "theatre of the mind." Of the 30 students enrolled, 10 of those students became OTR devotees. In addition, because of the radio class the career counselor invited recruiters from various college media departments.

Radio Ramble also brought in more money than I knew what to do with. Radio, or should I say, Radio and Roger, had done it.

The drama department was finally rollin' in dough.♣



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September 13

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October 11

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SPERDVAC CATALOG INDEX 22 JUNE 2008

SPERDVAC's website (sperdvac.org) has just added two new indexes for all our catalogs.

The first is the MASTER INDEX with 20,671 entries representing all the shows in all of our catalogs. This by far the largest and most helpful presentation of the Master Index. In it can be found all the shows in all of SPERDVAC's catalogs, from Archive to Video. The shows are presented alphabetically. With each show is a listing of all the episodes of that show available in our catalogs. The listings of the episodes are also alphabetical (NEW). It is this feature that makes the Index so helpful in locating a particular episode of say, VIC AND SADE. The following is what a visual presentation of this Index looks like.

(Note: The letter preceding the reel number indicates the library where the episode can be found.

A= Archive; G= General; HM= Hollywood Museum; L= Logs; S= Scripts; V= Video)

| REEL | SHOW | EPISODES | AIR DATE | C D |
|--------|----------------------|----------------------------------|------------|-----|
| G 2204 | UPPER ROOM THE | SLINGS & ARROWS OF OUTRAGEOUS... | | Yes |
| G 2204 | UPPER ROOM THE | THOES WHOM GOD HATH JOINED TOGET | | Yes |
| G 2204 | UPPER ROOM THE | TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE | | Yes |
| A 86 | USO FAREWELL PROGRAM | DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS JR. HOSTS | 1/11/1948 | No |
| A 145 | VET WANTS TO KNOW | HAROLD BRINNING | 10/16/1949 | No |
| G 969 | VIC AND SADE | AFTER DINNER TALK | | No |
| G 970 | VIC AND SADE | ARRANGING A HONEYMOON | 9/1/1944 | No |
| G 970 | VIC AND SADE | AUNT BESS' THIRD LETTER | 7/15/1944 | No |
| G 969 | VIC AND SADE | B.B.BAUGH AND STINGY BERRY JAM | 11/11/1943 | No |
| G 969 | VIC AND SADE | BACON SANDWICHES | | No |
| G 969 | VIC AND SADE | BOX OF OLD LETTERS | 9/26/1944 | No |

The second is the MINI INDEX for our catalogs. Everything in the Master Index is covered in this version. Each show that appears anywhere in our catalogs is represented in this presentation. What this presentation does is list every show and with it every tape in any library that has one or more episodes of the show. This presents an easy way for a member to see if he has covered all the possibilities. The following is a representation of what a printout would look like:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| CASE FOR DR. MORELLE (BBC), | G 169 | G 170 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CASEY CRIME PHOTOGRAPHER, | A 395 | A 394 | A 395 | A 396 | A 397 | A 398 | A 399 | A 400 | A 401 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| A 402 | A 403 | A 404 | A 405 | A 406 | A 407 | A 408 | A 409 | A 410 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| A 411 | A 412 | A 1707 | G 633 | G 1356 | S 294 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CASS COUNTRY BOYS, | A 629 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CAT THE, | HM 206 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CAVALCADE OF AMERICA, | A 236 | A 1619 | G 434 | G 1710 | G 1711 | G 1712 | G 1713 | G 1955 | G 1968 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| G 2089 | G 2090 | G 2091 | G 2092 | G 2093 | G 2094 | G 2095 | G 2096 | G 2097 | G 2098 | G 2099 | G 2100 | G 2101 | | | | | | | | |
| G 2102 | G 2104 | G 2105 | G 2106 | G 2107 | G 2108 | L 31 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CAVALCADE OF MUSIC, | G 2103 | G 2104 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CAVALCADE OF STARS, | G 827 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CBC RADIO MOVIE OF THE WEEK, | G 838 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CBS STAGE (CBC), | G 414 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| CBS ADVENTURE THEATER, | L 23 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

By having both of these versions available, the catalogs should become much more user friendly. Their inclusion on our website will help many of our members who are requesting that the entire catalogs be places on the site.



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And in a sense that's good, especially when contrasted to listeners being spoon-fed propaganda in countries with state-controlled media.

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